In the Realm of Literature, Music, Art and Drama

Top—Watteau: "A Garden Party," Munich
Left—Watteau: "Luncheon in the Park," Berlin
Centre— Pesne: "Frederick the Great," Berlin

Top—Watteau: "French Comedians," Berlin
Right—Pesne: "Engraver Schmidt and His Wife," Berlin
Bottom—Watteau: "Italian Comedians," Berlin

"Give Us Back Our Art Treasures," France Petitions

THE French review "La Renaissance de l'Art Français et des Industries de Luxe" publishes in a recent number an article advocating the idea that French treasures of art now in German possession should be transferred back to France as partial payment of war reparations. The article is written by Arsène Alexandre, and entitled "That Which We Have and That Which They Have." It reads:

"In these times when such great and numerous economic interests clash against each other, why should art not raise its voice?

"It is not up to us to criticise the work of the conferences and the deeds and words which they suffer to emanate to the general public. But it is well within our right to remark that up to date not a single word has been uttered in behalf of martyrized, pillaged or annihilated French art. No formal declaration has been issued as to the legitimate demands of France (and let us add, of Belgium and, while we are at it, of parts of Italy), whose satisfaction, in all justice, we ought to exact from Germany in kind.

"However, if there is too much delay in raising these questions, they will flatten out; their energy will be spent, and the Boche, after making as many ashheaps of cities, palaces, museums which had been the joy of the universe and the pride of France, will preserve all his prestige and will again display to best advantage all his artistic attractions.

"Therefore it is our duty to take up these grave questions. M. André Maurel has spoken in these columns with much knowledge about the collections of the Kaiser. We shall attempt this time, if not to exhaust the subject, at least to define and bring into relief all its aspects.

"Two sets of considerations will have to be examined in this attempt to trace the artistic relations between France and Germany. The one group, although retrospective, will illumine the future and suggest a line of conduct toward our aggressors. The other group of a more directly practical bearing, concerns the compensations which we have the right to exact.

"Let us begin with the latter. The list is too long to be given here in its entirety. We shall limit ourselves to a summary.

"First of all, we have to say a few words about the righteousness of this principle of reprisals. The Germans had, in the beginning of hostilities, a phrase which they applied to every massacre, as well as to every strategic operation, bombardment and pillage. 'This is war.' We could now retort, in our turn, 'Krieg ist Krieg.' But, singularly, they would fail to understand in German that which they pronounced in French. In the same manner, after they had said, with their abominable thinkers, 'might makes right,' they would stand aghast if we now should affirm that it does—but this time in our favor.

"But, happily for our dignity and for world morality, we have arguments of a much higher order to draw upon.

"M. de Dampierre, in his report before the Commission of Artistic Defence of the French Anti-Germanic Union, indorses the ideas set forth in another report submitted by M. Henri Marcel, Armand Dayot, André Maurel and myself, to wit, that works of art cannot be replaced by a monetary equivalent; that only art can replace art; finally, that a reprisal on the public collections of Germany is the only reparation strictly in the same nature and on the same level as the damage. All this is indisputable. The principle thus being fixed, let us proceed to a hurried survey of the French works of art which can be seized in Germany, outside of masterpieces of other schools, which also might be demanded.

"In the Museum of Berlin there are two Watteaus which are worth at least as much as those at Potsdam and the Royal Castle: The French Comedians and the Italian Comedians. Four magnificent Poussins: Juno and Argus, Jupiter as a Child, Phaethon, Renaud and Armide (the last taken from the Louvre in 1815); an exceptional Le Brun: The Jabach Family; the delicious portrait of Marie Mancini by Mignard; that of Desjardins, the sculptor, by Rigaud; finally, to cut it short, excellent pieces of Le Sueur, Pesne, Vouet, De Troy, Lancret, Claude Lorraine, and Clouet, as well as the portrait of Etienne Chevalier by Jean Foucquet.

"At the Grandducal Gallery in Karlsruhe there are six Chardians, one Desportes, one Largillière, two Rigauds, one Valentin, two Joseph Vernets.

"At the Munich Pinacothèque four Claude Lorraines, one Le Brun, four admirable Poussins, among them Midas and Bacchus; one Watteau, A Garden Party; Turenne, by Ph. de Champaigne (this simply must be returned to France); Vivien's Fenelon, numerous Joseph Vernets, other remarkable pieces of Bourdon, Courtois, Dughet, Lemoine, Le Sueur, Pesne, Valentin, Vouet, etc.

"In Augsburg: Mlle. Mars, by Gerard; some by S. Bourdon, Stella, Lancret, Largillière, Le Brun.

"In the ducal museum of Brunswick: Two beautiful Poussins; four important Rigaud portraits; De Troy's Mme. de Montespan and various other good paintings.

"In Cassel: Watteau, Oudry, Pater, Subleyras and others are well represented.

"In Darmstadt we find three important Jouvenets, one Mignard, Rigaud's Mazarin, then Delafosse, Hubert Robert, Van Loo, Vivien, Santerre, etc.

"Dresden is particularly rich, containing among others two Lancrets, two Claudes, one of the most powerful Poussins, the Martyrdom of St. Erasmus; two Watteaus, two Paters, one La Tour, one Nattier, Pesne, Sylvestre, etc.

"Leipsic has Greuze, Le Nain, Prud'hon, Girodet; Stuttgart, Callot, Courtois, Claude, Vernet; Schwerin, Boilly, Le Nain, Le Brun, Mignard, and thirty-seven paintings by Oudry. Here, in brief, is the beginning, as it were, of the chapter of compensations, a chapter which, to be sure, will contain sculptures, antique furniture, manuscripts, incunabula and other objects of art whose enumeration we cannot undertake.

"All these works which Germany could not create out of her civilization, her sentiment, her intellect, cannot be left to remain in a place where their presence was sterile. The lessons of French art, great, among the greatest, the German scholars have pretended to pronounce without having them comprehended. No Americans, English, Italians or Japanese—the most artistic races—will ever go to Germany to study those French works of art. An analogous case could be put forward by Belgium in regard to Van Eyck, Rubens, Van Dyck. It is to France they will turn for the accomplishment of their artistic education.

"Let us now take up the other set of considerations mentioned at the beginning. It may be argued that French art is doing a sort of colonizing work for French thought in Germany. This is the case, as history attests, only when French artists are invited to work in Germany. When, however, the Germans try to draw inspiration from the finished product, all that results is heavy, mournful, counterfeit.

"All these creations were understood just as the poetry of Ovid was understood by the Scythians—because the result is a modern Germany that glorifies in the Valhalla of Leipsic, the Rheingold Restaurant, the Avenue of Victory and the Wertheim Department Store in Berlin. German art (if we disregard two or three great painters like Durer and Holbein and in our times Menzel) was never anything but stubborn imitation, painful assimilation, without grandeur, without refined sentiment. What are the German primitives compared to the sublime and delightful Flamands? The rococo edifices of Dresden have almost a comic flavor. But this comic quality is involuntary, as when a bear is dancing gavotte.

"Oh, we shall be only too glad to leave to Germany the creations of her genius.

"On the other hand, what has German art brought to France? Nothing except a few horrors which to-day are estimated at their true value. What influence has it exercised on us? None.

"The survey is finished. It accords us the gifts of history with the sanction of justice."

Melody in the City's Snarl

MUSIC as a fundamental necessity is the conception David Mannes has. An incident that grew into his establishing a music school for colored people is related in "The Bellman":

"In order to be worth measuring, the scope of a man's work must be incalculable. 'So there you are!' as Henry James's people are so fond of saying, with a delicately controlled exultance in the elusiveness of things in general. Nevertheless, even the most casual tracing of the effect of a man's work upon the people and conditions around him will give you illuminating glimpses of his working basis. You will very soon see whether he stands for autocracy or democracy, and arrive at fairly definite convictions as to the depth of his sympathies, the calibre of his generosity, the operative soundness of his logic and the productive value of his relation to his fellows. Goodness cannot be dealt out like flannel petticoats. It does its own administering through the medium of outreaching thought spontaneously shared. The men and women who recognize this are the men and women whose work counts. That is why David Mannes's idea of music as a fundamental necessity that must and can be made universally available is bearing fruit in thousands of American homes to-day.

"In the case of Mr. Mannes, it is quite safe to say that if the way had not come to find him, he most certainly would have found the way; and this very fact enhances, instead of minimizes, the importance of the meeting which gave so vital an impetus to his career.

"The incident is so well known that it would be superfluous to repeat it here, except that, like all really significant happenings, it wears a new aspect every time it is retold. Here, then, was a bitterly lonely man walking rather a dreary street. A violinist who had studied abroad for years, he had come back to America hoping to find his livelihood in his art; but no orchestra would admit him. In spite of his talent and musical training, every avenue of musical progress was barred against him. A little desultory fiddling in amusement places of the poorer sort was all that he could find to do; for he was a negro.

"On this particular day, out of the bewildering snarl of city noises, he half unconsciously began to untangle a little thread of melody, and found himself following it with growing persistence till it finally led him down to a basement room where a small boy was playing a violin. The look on the child's face and a certain instinctive breadth and freedom in the way he handled his bow, told the older musician that here, at least, was work that could not be denied him. He had still the chance to give.

"The promptness with which he went about it proves that he would inevitably have found some one with whom to share his all, even if he had not chanced to go down that especial street at that especial hour. Neither of the two was dependent upon meeting the other in order to fulfill the law of his being; the happy thing about their finding each other was that the response was so fine and so complete. The man recognized the quality of the child's gift, and could forget his own broken career in developing it. The boy felt the selflessness of the giving, and his gratitude has found singularly effectual ways of expression as the years have gone by.

"What this one man brought to him he has been giving back to as many of his countrymen as possible ever since. One of the many things he has done was to found a music school in New York for colored people, where they could go in the evening after their work was done, and find rest and recreation. Here it was made possible for them to study music under a wise guidance that shaped the course according to the conditions of their daily lives, and gave them what best supplied each individual need.

"The story of the colored washerwoman who wanted to be able to play 'Nearer, My God, to Thee,' has been so often reprinted that it has lost its original clearness of outline. It frequently appears shorn of all coherence by ending where the real significance begins. The requoters have dwelt upon the pathetic stumbling of the toil-stiffened fingers through a dreary round of five-finger exercises, because her teacher had promised that, if she did this faithfully, she should play 'Nearer, My God, to Thee,' within a year. They have often forgotten to add that, when Mr. Mannes found out her heart's desire, he said, 'You shall play it in a week,' and taught her the melody then and there. He did not wait until her hand position was all that could be desired, or until her fingers became elastic and supple. He sat down beside her and showed her how to find the much-beloved air, phrase by phrase, until she could really see the whole melodic line shining up from the keyboard and could trace it rhythmically for herself. Then he talked with the teacher. He told her to show her pupils some simple chords the next time she came. He also said, 'You have missed an opportunity.' The teacher explained that the woman had not spoken about playing the hymn after the very first, and she had no idea she cared so much. 'We are here to find out just those things,' he said. 'You are not developing a virtuoso; you are helping a tired woman to find rest and delight.'"

Lord Nelson's Letters

JUST before the war a collection of letters by Lord Nelson to his wife was sold at Christie's, London, for $11,000. In these letters the beginning of Nelson's infatuation for Lady Hamilton was shown and the collection ended with a letter from Lady Nelson, dated December 18, 1801, containing the appeal; "Do, my dear, husband, let us live together. I can never be happy until such an event takes place. I assure you again I have but one wish in the world—to please you." On the envelope of this letter was the remark, "Opened by Lord N. in mistake, but not read."

There has now been sold at Sotheby's a series of nearly one hundred of Nelson's letters to Lady Hamilton, forming part of the Morrison collection. Lord Nelson's letters to Lady Hamilton started with the arrangement of mentioning her as "Mrs. Thomson."

This plan soon broke down. Fits of jealousy caused him to throw prudence to the winds. In February, 1801, Nelson was beside himself when the conquettish Emma wrote to him that the Prince Regent was to dine with the Hamiltons. Several letters were furiously dispatched, culminating in this astonishing document:

". . . . I have read your letter, your resolution never to go where the fellow is, but you must have him at home. Oh, God! but you cannot, I suppose, help it, and you cannot turn him out of your own house. He will stay and sup and sit up till 4 in the morning, and the fewer that stay the better. Oh, God! why do I live? But I do not blame you; it is my misfortune. I feel nobody uses me ill. I am only fit to be second, or third, or 4, or to black shoes, &c.

". . . . Knowing your determined courage . . . I would have laid my head upon the block with the axe uplifted and said strike, if Emma does not say to Sir William before the fellow, 'My character cannot, shall not suffer, by permitting him to visit.' Oh! I wish I had been so placed then and there, then my head, my distracted head must have been off. Hush, hush, my poor heart, keep in my breast, be calm, Emma is true! &c.

". . . . Did you sit alone with the villain for a moment? No, I will not believe it. Oh, God! Oh, God! Keep my senses. Do not let the rascal in, &c.

". . . . I hope you will have seen Troubridge last night, and he will probably tell you that he did not leave me perfectly at ease. In short, when I gave a letter for you it rushed into my mind that in ten hours he would see you. A flood of tears followed—it was too much for me to bear. I could not help telling him what would I not have given to have been in his pocket."

The last (unfinished) letter to Emma from Nelson—found in the cabin of the Victory after Trafalgar—is in the British Museum. The last finished letter to her we remember seeing fetch £1,030 at Sotheby's fifteen years ago. The following, which he wrote on March 1, 1801, will take its place among the unrestrained examples of a man of genius writing under the domination of a love momentarily disdainful of anything else:

"Now, my own dear wife, for such you are in my eyes and in the face of heaven. I can give full scope to my feelings. . . . You know, my dearest Emma, that there is nothing in this world that I would not do for us to live together, and to have our dear little child with us. . . . I love, I never did love any one else, I never had a dear pledge of love till you gave me; one, and you, thank my God, never gave one to anybody else. . . . Let Sir Hyde [Parker] have any glory he can catch—I envy him not. You, my beloved Emma, and my country, are the two dearest objects of my fond heart, a heart susceptible and true, only place confidence in me, and you never shall be disappointed. I burn all your dear letters, because it is right for your sake, and I wish you would burn all mine—they can do no good, and will do us both harm if any seizure of them, or the dropping even one of them, would fill the mouths of the world sooner than we intend. Kiss and bless our dear Horatio, &c."

He did not know that long before she came into his life, and three years even before he first paid court to the lady who became Lady Nelson, Emma Hart was writing in this impassioned strain to Charles Greville:

"To live without you is impossible. I love you to that degree that at this time there is not a hardship upon earth, either of poverty, hunger, cold, death, or even to walk barefooted to Scotland to see you, but what I would undergo."

Despite all this history proves that neither Emma nor anybody else really intervened between Nelson and his career of duty. An unconscious tribute to this is forthcoming in some lines composed by Emma herself, from which these are taken:

Silent grief and sad forebodings
(Lest I ne'er should see him more)
Fill my heart when gallant Nelson
Hoists Blue Peter at the fore.
Oft he kissed my lips at parting
And at every kiss he swore
Nought could force him from my bosom,
Save Blue Peter at the fore.
Oh, that I might with my Nelson,
Sail the wide world o'er and o'er,
Never should I then with sorrow,
See Blue Peter at the fore.—